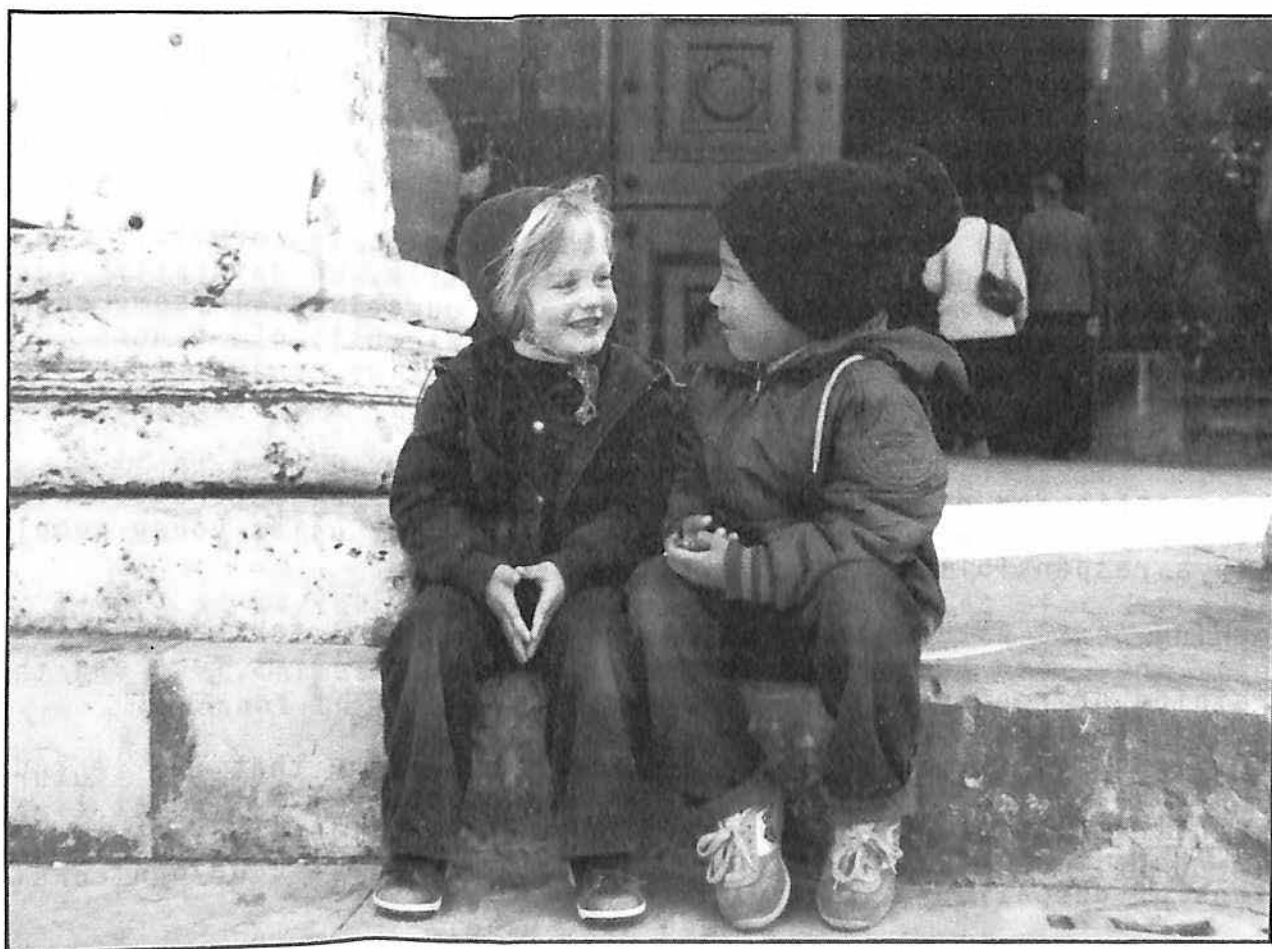


YOUTH NEWSLETTER

No 13 February 1984

YOUTH DESK
Lutheran World Federation



1984 - EAST WEST ENCOUNTERS.

1984 -- A NEW YEAR?

by Joan Lofgren

In George Orwell's novel, "Nineteen Eighty-four", the world is pictured as a hellish sphere of oppression and mere survival. People live in fear, fear of the authorities and fear of their neighbors. Trust is rare.

As we begin the year Orwell identified in what at that time was considered a "futuristic" book, we should consider a few elements of life as he painted it, and whether or not they will be a part of our real 1984.

"There's nothing new." It takes alot to shock us today. With the media reaching into most of the world, poverty, starvation, the plight of refugees and all types of wars can be seen on a daily basis. The people of Orwell's 1984 had grown tired of wars -- it didn't matter who was fighting whom or for what reason, it was all the same. Even though we are young and have not had many years to see evil at work in the world, we are surprisingly unsurprised at the tragedies around us.

"It will always be like this" The power of the oppressive authorities in "1984" was due in part to the apathy of the people, their belief that nothing they could do would make a difference. Youth today, in various situations in the north, south, east, west, often feel frustration and futility in their attempts to shape the future.

"The only thing I can do is to protect myself, to survive." In a world where changing the big picture is futile, we naturally turn inward and try to create happiness for ourselves. In some countries, the consequences of acting in the interests of others can be grave -- loss of opportunities for education, a job, imprisonment or death. In other countries it is simply very easy to "tend one's garden" and ignore the outside world.

These attitudes displayed in Orwell's 1984 may be understandable, but they are also dangerous, especially for us as young people with a responsibility for the future.

Nothing new? Although war is old, its forms are taking increasingly new and dangerous forms, in the nuclear arms race and the draining of resources from development.

It will go on forever? As Christians, we believe that the future is open, and in God's hands. Although we may feel futile at times as instruments of God's power in the world, we can always remember the hope that moves us forward, and helps us to see beyond conditions of despair.

(continued next page)

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Editorial (cont.)

I'll protect myself! Sin is often described as a condition of estrangement from God and fellow humans. A world of individuals fighting each other for survival is the opposite of what God has revealed as a vision of human community -- a vision of shalom, of sharing and mutual trust and cooperation. At the very least, within the thinking of Orwell's society, individual survival is still impossible, but is always dependent on the cooperation of others.

As young people facing another year of poverty and wars, manipulation and oppression, whether in our own homes or the homes of our brothers and sisters, we are challenged with these destructive attitudes. But we also have an example, however imperfect, of hope alive in community -- in our churches. Although many of us are alienated from our churches, there are still signs of life and hope to be found in our ragged version of the Body of Christ.

Hope is not optimism or pessimism, but is rooted in a covenant God has made with us, and which we in turn feel toward other humans living today and in the future. We do not live for ourselves, but for others, and in spite of the pessimism we may experience, that covenant to others moves us forward into the future.

We can also be encouraged by the signs of hope for the future already with us -- The Future is Now. The signs of the kingdom are here. So we need not move blindly into the future without the help of the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Just as we see signs of hope around us, we can also be signs of hope ourselves. How will we be signs of hope in the coming year? Will a gathering of 250 from east, west, north, south in Budapest next summer be such a sign? We will inevitably bring with us the conflicts, misunderstandings, and barriers of the world into which we were born and in which we must go on living.

But we will be surprised by the Spirit, with the gifts of reconciliation, which will strengthen us to face the future, to commit ourselves to be God's instruments in shaping that future.

Although it may be easy to celebrate the surprises of reconciliation amongst ourselves, will we continue to celebrate it when we return to our homes? Will we witness to our elders that we experience a covenant to the future?

We hope so.

YOUTH DESK NOTES

As we get closer to the Assembly and the Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering, the work at the Youth Desk grows, but also makes us excited to be part of such preparations. In addition to the Pre-Assembly preparations, work in the regions and on special topics such as worship continues.

EASTERN EUROPE (Joan)

Since our last newsletter, I spent three weeks traveling in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, for Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering preparations and to learn more about the situation of youth in the churches of that area. I am grateful for the generosity of my hosts and the opportunities I received to glimpse a little bit of daily life in those countries. Travels such as this are both a great privilege and a responsibility -- to share what has been learned with others.

PRE-ASSEMBLY REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS

The Asia Pre-Assembly Consultation took place in Indonesia in November, where youth concerns in the region were discussed under the leadership of Rev. Julius Paul, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia-Singapore (and former intern preceding the Youth Desk).

VISIT TO ETHIOPIA (AIf)

I was invited by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus to attend a conference for youth secretaries in Addis Ababa in the end of November. In addition to getting glimpses of the situation of youth and youth work within the different synods, I was also able to attend several youth meetings in Addis during my stay. It was very encouraging to see how young people crowded the churches even for meetings on usual weekdays.

WEST AFRICA YOUTH LEADERS' WORKSHOP

In spite of many obstacles a workshop for youth leaders from West-Africa took place in Jimeta, Nigeria December 1-9. About 25 youth leaders from Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroun, Central African Republic and Zaire were gathered for some days of sharing and learning under the theme YOUTH LEADERS TOGETHER - LEARNING TO LEAD. A fuller report will be shared in the next issue.

LATIN AMERICA YOUTH LEADERS' CONFERENCE

The Latin America Youth Leaders' Conference was held as this issue was finished, in Port Alegre, Brazil. The participants first took part in an annual youth camp organized by the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil. This took place in Agudo under the theme PEACE THROUGH JUSTICE.

Then the conference was held at the Theological Faculty of the church in Sao Leopoldo January 30 - February 4.

Youth Desk Notes (cont.)

COMPUTER - COMPUTER - COMPUTER

As we reported in the last issue, we are presently being computerized which sometimes causes complications. This issue was scheduled to be out at the end of 1983, but as not all addresses were yet put into the computer we had to postpone publication until we were sure that this issue would reach our subscribers - and now we hope that it reaches you all!!!

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PRE-ASSEMBLY YOUTH GATHERING UPDATE

by Joan Lofgren

Participants

The nomination process for the Youth Gathering is coming to a close, in spite of delays, and we hope to have the final list of those coming to the Gathering by the end of this month. You will recall that there are three categories of participants: Youth Delegates to the VII LWF Assembly, Stewards for the Assembly, and Other Participants, invited primarily for the Youth Gathering.

Preparatory Committee

The International Preparatory Committee for the Youth Gathering will have its second and final major meeting in the GDR (Berlin) the first week in March. The program for the Gathering will be finalized during that meeting.

Resource People

Some examples of those invited so far to be resource people (speakers, etc.) are Dr. Allan Boesak from South Africa for Bible Studies, Mr. Richard Caemmerer from the USA to help us express ourselves artistically, and several LWF staff working with the churches in economic development. We have also invited a music group and a solo singer to lead us musically. The Lutheran Church in Hungary has also been invited to provide us with several resource people, among them the preacher for our opening worship. We are now especially seeking female resource people for various contributions.

Audio-Visual Presentation

We are now seeking slides that show something of the life of youth in the Lutheran churches, in order to make a slide presentation on youth to the Assembly and Pre-Assembly. If you have photos or slides which you think would be good for such a presentation, please send them to the Youth Desk (preferably with the negatives). If they would be appropriate for our presentation, we would then make a copy and return the negatives to you. It is very important that we get photos or slides from the "grass roots"!!

Theme Symbol

After a tremendous response to the "appeal" made in a recent issue of IDL (LWF Eastern European news service), the 3 best designs for a symbol of "In Christ -- The Future is Now" will be chosen. You will see the winning design in our next issue.

Post-Assembly Trip to the Soviet Union

The Youth Desk is cooperating with Lutheran World Ministries (the USA National Committee) in sponsoring a visitation of a small international group of youth who will be present in Budapest, to the "Baltic Churches" -- of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. This visitation is seen as an opportunity to extend the fellowship of the Gathering to our brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union.

Visitors in Budapest

If you are interested to come to the Assembly and you are not an official participant from your church in either the Assembly or the Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering, you may wish to come as a visitor.

We will have a visitors program at the Assembly, which will especially offer activities during the times when there are closed sessions, which the visitors are not allowed to attend.

There will also be special activities for young people, and some events led by young people, especially singing, for example.

If you wish to come as an individual or as a group, you can contact these tourist agencies in Budapest:

Budapest Tourist (a travel bureau that also handles camping)

Roosevelt Tér 5
Budapest, H-1051
HUNGARY

Telephone: 1/3-555 Telex: 22-5726

Express (dealing especially with housing for youth and students)
for example, in university dormitories

Szabadsag Tér 16
Budapest, H-1054
HUNGARY

Telephone: 317-777, Telex 22-5139

Since there will be many tourists in Budapest during this time anyway, it may be difficult to find places in the university dormitories. You should, therefore, write as soon as possible for a reservation.

We will continue to keep you informed about preparations for the Youth Gathering, but if you have questions about the PAYG or the Assembly, please contact Joan Lofgren or Alf Idland at the Youth Desk.

IN CHRIST-- THE FUTURE IS NOW

by Peter Lodberg & Tamas Fabiny

In Budapest, July 12-20, 1984, we, young people from all over the world, will come together and have a celebration where we will worship, sing, listen, pray, act, and witness to each other and gain strength to be sent out into the world. We will confess that IN CHRIST THE FUTURE IS NOW, because we dare to trust that in Jesus Christ God's hope is for the the world.

We come to Budapest because we want to experience and express unity, in spite of all the tensions and diversities we know from our particular political, social, and ecclesiological backgrounds. We dare to name what separates us from each other, knowing and respecting our parents' responsibility for the present world-order. We can't avoid bringing our heritage with us and creating tensions among each other and in ourselves -- even sometimes without knowing it.

But our hope is that, as young people, we shall be able to overcome these difficulties. We pray for the spirit of wisdom and for the spirit of courage. We need these both for keeping the heritage of efforts for unity but refusing the heritage of tensions. That's why this youth gathering may become a test of our generation: are we only "young people" -- or "youth": a generation with common interests, common responsibilities, and common goals.

Although we live in diversity, we will spare no efforts to make fast, with bonds of peace, the unity which the Spirit gives (Ephesians 4.3). As the present and existing body of Christ we know that Christ has called us to a new life in peace, justice, and freedom. All three are signs and fruits of the Kingdom of God. Often it is very difficult to experience the reality of peace, justice, and freedom in our church and society, because we are still caught up in mistrust and ungodly social structures.

But in Christ the future is now. The body of Christ is a reality. As parts of the body, we experience through worship and fellowship God's presence among us. He has made us new in mind and spirit, and we have put on a new nature, of God's creating, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth (Ephesians 4:23-24).

In its unity, the church is a credible, acting community, where we realize the totality and wholeness of peace, justice and freedom, and the meaning of them for our daily, social-life. When our daily-life experiences are different from the reality of peace, justice and freedom, the all-embracing love of God is corrupted; society and the church need reconciliation and to be restored through God's acting in us.

As youth, we can appreciate the need for reconciliation, because

we are people of yesterday -- with all the values and divisions we have inherited; people of today -- if we take responsibility in our world; and people of tomorrow -- knowing that changes for tomorrow have to be made today.

Because we, as youth, feel the tension in our own lives between tomorrow and today, we are especially aware of the challenge to make changes, as it is expressed in the Bible. The theme, In Christ -- the Future is Now will hopefully extend this challenge, as it asks us youth from all over the world whether or not we have any visions of the future; visions which have already begun in Christ, but are to be realized today. We want to begin with visions and continue with acts.

How Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering will reflect the challenge to make changes is hard to say, but we will surely throw off falsehood; speak the truth to each other, for we are all parts of one body (Eph. 4:25). And that is already a beginning to peace, justice, and freedom.

JESUS CHRIST THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

By Allan Boesak

(As Dr. Allan Boesak will be the Bible Study Speaker in our Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering, we have chosen to print his presentation on the theme of the World Council of Churches General Assembly in Vancouver last summer.)

Jesus Christ the life of the world! These are words that speak of joy, of meaning, of hope. For some, they may even speak of triumph and victory. These are words that have a ring of certainty in them. Yet, in the uncertain world of suffering, oppression and death, what do they mean? The realities of the world in which we live suggest the cold grip of death rather than the freedom of life.

Violence, greed and the demonic distortion of human values continue to destroy God's world and his people. Economic exploitation is escalating rather than abating and economic injustice is still the dominant reality in the relationships between rich and poor countries. Racism is as rampant as ever, not only in South Africa, but also in other parts of the world. In its alliances with national security ideologies it has required a new cloak of respectability and has become even more pervasive. In South Africa apartheid and injustice still reign supreme. Inequality is still sanctified by law and racial superiority is still justified by theology. Today, with the blatant support of so many Western governments, apartheid seems stronger than ever and the dream of justice and human dignity for South Africa's black people more remote than ever.

In our world, it is not the joyful, hopeful sound of the Word of life that is being heard. No, that Word is drowned by the ugly sound of gunfire, by the screams of our children and the endless cry of the powerless: "How long, Lord?"

In too many places too many children die of hunger and too many people just disappear because they dare to stand up for justice and human rights. Too many are swept away by the tides of war and too many are tortured in dungeons of death. In too many eyes the years of endless struggle have extinguished the fires of hope and joy and too many bodies are bowed down by the weight of that peculiarly repugnant death called despair. Too many young people believe that their youth and their future are already powdered to dust by the threat of nuclear destruction. And even in the face of all of this, too many in the Christian Church remain silent. We have not yet understood that every act of inhumanity, every unjust law, every untimely death, every utterance of faith in weapons of mass destruction, every justification of violence and oppression is a sacrifice on the altar of the false gods of death; it is a denial of the Lord of life.

No, for millions of people it is true: we are not uplifted by the Word of life, we are crushed by the litany of death.

Yet the gospel affirms: Jesus Christ is the life of the world. (Jhn 6:35,48; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6; Rev. 1:17,18; etc). That means He is the source of life, He is the giver of the sacred gift of life. That He intends for us a life filled with abundance, joy and meaning. He is the Messiah in whose eyes our lives are precious.

But this is precisely the problem. Dare we believe this? Can we believe this without making of our faith a narrow, spiritual escapism? Can we avoid the cynicism of "reality"? Can we find a way to live with that painful dilemma: "Lord, I believe, please help my unbelief!" And even more painful: can we accept the reality of hope and the call to battle that lie in this affirmation? In other words, is the joyous affirmation, this confession that Jesus Christ is the life of the world, really meant for the missions who suffer and die, who are oppressed and who live without hope in the world today? While discussing this theme with a group in my congregation, a woman said quietly, almost despairingly: "It seems you have to be white and rich to believe this."

But there are two things we must remember when talking about this. First, in the gospel this affirmation is never a triumphalistic war-cry. It is never a slogan built on might and power. It is a confession in the midst of weakness, suffering and death. It is the quiet, subversive piety which the Christian Church cannot do without. Second, we must be reminded that in the Bible this affirmation is given to people who in their situation were the poor, oppressed and the weak. They were the people who lived on the underside of history. And it is they who are called upon to confirm this truth: Jesus Christ is the life of the world.

Jesus Christ the Life..(cont.)

In the gospel of John, chapter 4, the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman is a good illustration of this truth. She is the paradigm par excellence of the despised, the weak and the oppressed, just like the children are that elsewhere in the gospel. She becomes the very example of the dejected people of this world. First of all, she is a woman, with all that that means in the society of her day. Notice how John makes a point of stating the disciples' astonishment that Jesus was in discussion with a woman. She is also a Samaritan, and therefore despised and rejected by the Jews. Her religion is considered inferior and in her own community she is an outcast because of her way of life. (This is probably the reason why she goes to that well alone, at a most unusual hour of the day). But it is precisely to her that Jesus speaks of these unfathomable things: the life-giving waters, and the waters of life.

Likewise, the Apocalypse of John is written to a weak, scattered underground church, suffering severely under the persecution of a ruthless tyrant. They were people who had no recourse, no protection under the law, no "connections" in high and powerful places, no political or economic power. Their lives were cheap. They were completely and utterly surrendered to the mercy of a man who did not know the meaning of the word, whom John could only describe with the telling title: "beast". From a purely human point of view, they had not a chance in the world, there was precious little upon which they could build their hopes for the future. But like the Samaritan woman, they are the ones who hear the message and to whom this is proclaimed: "I am the first and the last and the living One..." They knew with a certainty not born of earthly power: Jesus Christ, not the Ceasar, (in spite of all his power!) is the life of the world. The claims of divinity, of immortality, of omniscience and power are the lies, the half-truths, the propaganda without which no tyrant can survive. But the truth stands: Jesus Christ is the life of the world, and He is indeed Lord of life.

The Church understood this confession not only as comfort in times of trial and darkness, but as essential part of that basic, subversive confession: Jesus Christ is Lord. In this way it became not only comfort to the persecuted, oppressed Church, but also a ringing protest against the arrogance of earthly potentates who wanted so desperately to create the impression that they decided over the life and death of the people of God. And the Church knew this to be the truth, not only for the life hereafter, but the truth for the very life and the very world in which they struggled to believe, to be faithful, to be obedient. To understand that is to understand the power, nay more, to experience the power of the life-giving Word. It is to drink of the life-giving and living waters even while facing suffering, destruction and death. It is to understand and experience what it means to worship that is not confined to certain moments only. This is a worship which encompasses all of our life, so that every prayer for liberation, every act for the sake of human dignity, every commitment in the struggle for true human freedom, every protest against the sinful realities of this world, becomes an offering to the living One for the sake of his King-

dom.

Jesus says: "The hour comes, and it is now..." Here the present and the future coincide. The moment of the hesitant, yet faithful human response and the moment of the favour of the Lord come together.

This is the source of the acts of sublime courage sometimes displayed in the witness and the life of the Christian Church. This is what led to the witness of the Christian Church at the martyrdom of St. Polycarp:

"The blessed Polycarp died a martyr's death on the 23rd of February, on the Great Sabbath, the eight hour. Herod imprisoned him when Phillip of Tralles was the High Priest, and Statius Quartus was the Pre Consul, whilst for ever is King our Lord Jesus Christ. His be the glory, honour, majesty and an everlasting throne from generation to generation. Amen."

And indeed, it may seem as if for the moment the dictators of this world, the powerful and the mighty have full control over this world. Their arrogance seems to have no bounds. Their power seems unchecked. But the Church knows: Jesus Christ is Lord of history, He is Lord of life, and his truth shall have the final word.

In the same way Christians in South Africa begin to understand that for us God's moment is brought together with our present reality. In discerning that the Church is called to an extraordinary courageous witness for the sake of the gospel. So we hear Bishop Desmond Tutu, the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches saying to the Minister of Law and order: "Mr. Minister, we must remind you that you are not God. You are just a man. And one day your name shall merely be a faint scribble on the pages of history, while the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church, shall live forever..."

The Christian Church can take this stand, not because it possesses earthly power, nor because it has "control" over the situation. Over against the structures of political, economic and military power who seek to rule this world the Church remains weak and in a sense defenceless. But it takes this stand because it refuses to believe that the powers of oppression, death and destruction have the last word. Even while facing these powers the Church continues to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and therefore the life of the world. And it is this faith in the living One, this refusal to bow down to the false gods of death, that is the strength of the Church.

But this affirmation has another ramification. Jesus Christ is the life of the world. His concern is not only for the Church but for the world. In his life, death and resurrection lies not only the future of the Church, but the future of the world. In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul is persistent in proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord of the Church and of the cosmos. Therefore, his being our peace, has consequences not only for the Church,

but also for the world. Therefore the Church must proclaim, clearly and unequivocally, that Jesus Christ came to give meaningful life to the world, so that all of human history, all human activity can be renewed and liberated from death and destruction.

The life of the world, the destruction of this world, the future of this world, is therefore the concern of the Church. We have a responsibility for this world, for it is God's world. And if this world is threatened by the evils of militarism, materialism, greed, racism, it is very much the concern of the Church. It is the Church who has heard the words: "Today I am giving you a choice between good and evil, between life and death... choose life!" It is the Church who has heard the words: "I have come so that they may have life, and that abundantly..." And because we have heard this, and because we confess Jesus Christ as the life of the world, we dare not be silent.

This Assembly must speak out. We must confess, humbly but without any hesitation, our faith in Jesus Christ, the life of the world. We must, humbly but without any hesitation, renew our commitment to Jesus Christ, the life of the world. And this faith, this commitment, must be the basis of our action on the issues of peace, justice and human liberation. We must not hesitate to address ourselves to the question of peace and to the possibility of total nuclear destruction. We must be clear: the nuclear arms race, the employment of God-given human talents and possibilities for the creation of ever more refined weapons of mass destruction, and the call to put our faith in these weapons so as to secure our peace, is not simply a temporary madness, it is essentially sinful and contrary to the purposes of God for this world and for the people of his heart.

I am not persuaded that the issue of peace is simply one of fashion, a fad that will go away tomorrow. I do not agree with those who believe that this issue is simply one of political and military calculations, so that the Church should withdraw from the debate and let the problems be solved by the politicians and the military strategists. I remain convinced that the issue of peace as it faces us today, lies at the very heart of the gospel.

But there is something else I must say about this. When the World Alliance of Reformed Churches met in Ottawa last August, we spent considerable time discussing a statement on peace. During the debate, a delegate from Africa made a remark that very poignantly raised some of the tensions surrounding this issue in the ecumenical movement today. He said: "In this document, the word 'nuclear' is used a number of times, but I don't even see the word 'hunger'. In my village, the people will not understand the word 'nuclear', but they know everything about hunger and poverty."

What he was really talking about was the concern of many Christians in the "Third World" that the issue of peace will be separated from the issue of justice, making of "peace" primarily a

Jesus Christ the Life..(cont.)

North-Atlantic concern. This should not happen. First of all because ideologies of militarism and national security are international in character and cause deprivation and the continuation of injustice everywhere, but especially in the so-called "third world" countries. But secondly, and more importantly, in the Bible peace and justice are never separated. Peace is never simply the absence of war, it is the active presence of justice. It has to do with human fulfilment, with liberation, with wholeness, with a meaningful life and well-being, not only for the individual, but for the community as a whole. And the prophet Isaiah speaks of peace as the offspring of justice.

So it may be true that the issues of justice, racism, hunger and poverty are largely unresolved issues for the ecumenical movement. It may be true that these issues presented the churches with painful dilemmas, but it cannot be true that we will be willing to use the issue of peace to avoid those dilemmas. One cannot use the gospel to escape from the demands of the gospel. And one cannot use the issue of peace to escape from the unresolved issues of injustice, poverty, hunger and racism. If we do this we will make of our concern for peace an ideology of oppression which in the end will be used to justify injustice.

But there is one last point we have to make. Jesus Christ is the life of the world because He reveals the truth about Himself, the Church, humankind and the world. He is the Messiah, the chosen One of God who proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord. In Him is the fulfilment of the promises of Yahweh. He is the Servant of the Lord who shall not cease his struggle until justice shall triumph on the earth. (Is. 42:1-3; Mt. 12:17-21). In Him shall the nations place their hope.

Jesus, in his life, death and resurrection, is Himself the guarantee of life, peace and human dignity. He is the Messiah who struggles and suffers with his people. And yet, He is the Victor. He is King in his suffering, not in spite of it. There is therefore an inseparable link between Pontius Pilate's "Ecce homo!" and his "There is your King!" (Jhn 19:4,19). So it is that the Apocalypse speaks of Jesus both as the Lamb that was slaughtered and as the Rider on the white horse. The One who died is the One who lives forever. The suffering Servant of the Word is the Ruler of the kings of the earth. The One who was willing to give up his life is Jesus the Messiah, the life of the world.

This is the truth that is revealed to the Church even as we speak the words: Jesus Christ is the life of the world. The Revelation of John reminds us of the victory of the saints. But again, it is not a victory brought about by earthly powers. "They won the victory over (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the truth they proclaimed, and because they did not love their life unto death" (Rev. 12:11). This truth is the basis upon which the Church stands. It is the essence of the witness of the Church in the world. It is the essence of the confession: Jesus Christ is the life of the world. The Church can only say this, if we are willing to give our life for the sake of the

Jesus Christ the Life..(cont.)

word. We can only say this if we truly believe that there are some things so dear, some things so precious, some things so eternally true that they are worth dying for. And the truth that Jesus Christ is the life of the world, is worth giving our life for.

The truth that the Messiah reveals is contrary to the lies, the propaganda, the idolatrous, the untrustworthy in the world. His truth is the truth that holds the freedom and the life of the world. And this we are called to proclaim. And so as we begin these two weeks together as the assembled churches of the world, let us affirm this truth, and let us believe:

It is not true that this world and its people are doomed to die and be lost -

This is true: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life;

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination hunger and poverty, death and destruction -

This is true: I have come that they may have life, and that abundantly;

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction have come to stay forever -

This is true: For unto us a child is born, and unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called wonderful councillor, mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world -

This is true: To me is given all authority in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you, even unto the end of the world.

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church, before we can do anything -

This is true: I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall have dreams...

It is not true that our dreams for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity, of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history -

This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

So let us use these two weeks to dream, let us use these two weeks to prophesy; let us use these two weeks to see visions of love, and peace and justice. Let us use these two weeks to affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage:

Jesus Christ - the life of the world.

LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS

Dorothee Sölle

(The West-German theologian, Dr. Dorothee Sölle, was one of the speakers in Vancouver. The following is part of her presentation on Life in Its Fullness. The full text can be provided upon request).

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I speak to you as a woman from one of the wealthiest countries in the world; a country whose history is tainted with bloodshed and the stench of gas that some of us who are Germans have not been able to forget; a country that today has the world's greatest concentration of nuclear weapons lying at the ready. I would like to tell you a little about the fears and anxieties that reign in anger, in criticism and in sorrow. The grief I feel at my own country, the friction that sets me at odds with my own society is not a whim on my part or because I have nothing better to do; it springs from my belief in the life of the world as I find it in the poor man from Nazareth who had neither wealth nor weapons. This man, a poor man, portrays the life of the world for us to see and points us towards the ground of our being, to God. Christ is God's exegesis, the exposition who made him known to us (Jn 1:18).

I don't intend any kind of religious imperialism in saying this, as though there could be no other expositions to God in other religions; I mean it rather in the sense of unconditional commitment to become fully involved with this Jesus Christ if we seek the life of the world and not death.

Christ came into the world that all may have life "and have it in all its fullness", or, as it can also be translated, "that they may live and find in abundance all that they need" (Jn 10:10). What is this "life in all its fullness"? Where does it take place? Who lives it? Looking at our world I see two ways in which life is being destroyed: outward poverty and inward emptiness.

For a good two-thirds of the human family there is no such thing as "life in all its fullness" because they are impoverished, living on the edge of death in stark, economically conditioned poverty. They are hungry, they have no shelter, no shoes, no medicine for their children, no clean water to drink, no work - and they see no way getting their oppressors off their backs. Trade agreement and international relations are dictated by the rich first world and imposed on the poor plunging them daily deeper into destitution. The mere struggle for survival destroys the fullness of life, the shalom of God, of which the Bible speaks: Where people need not be anxious about their daily food, where they are healthy, where they are not threatened by their enemies and can enjoy a long life in the bosom of their family and community. "Long life is in her right hand, in her left hand are riches and honours", as we read in Proverbs 3:16. Poverty destroys this life which is promised to all of us.

I would like here to read you a letter from a Brazilian woman, which she dictated to a nun because she herself cannot read or write. "My name is Severina, I come from the north-east. Up there in my country two of my babies died because I had no milk. One day in my village I saw forty-two little coffins being carried to the cemetery. My sister-in-law who was very poor had seventeen children: three of them lived, all the others died before they were four. Of the three who lived two are not normal. I was with her for the births and sometimes there wasn't even a clean piece of sheet to wrap the baby in. That's what happens in lots of families, thousands even - ten or fifteen children are born and five or six of the ten die. And there are priests who tell us, 'If you have seven children who die as infants you will be blessed: a crown of angels awaits you in heaven'. But who really knows what it means for a woman to carry a child for nine months, weeping for the first three of them because she knows she will never see her baby grow up - and that perhaps ten times or more. Is she to love the child only to see it die of starvation within four months?

Can that really be what they mean when they speak about 'human dignity'? Of course, I see from the gospel that Claudia and Vera often read to me that Christ loved poverty; but not human suffering, he didn't put up with that.

There's a difference between being poor and having nothing to give your baby except sweetened water, and you give her the water and you know she's going to die."

Christ came into the world so that all might have life "in all its fullness" but the absolute impoverishment which is a crime in a technologically developed world is destroying people physically, spiritually, mentally and also religiously because it poisons hope and makes a mockery of faith by turning it into helpless apathy. What comes between Christ and the world's impoverished peoples is exploitation, the sin of the rich who are seeking to destroy Christ's promise. Speaking of "fullness of life" Christ says in John's Gospel: "I am the door; anyone who comes into the fold through me shall be safe. He shall go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal, to kill, to destroy; I have come that human beings may have life, and may have it in all its fullness" (Jn 10:9-10).

Christ and 'the thief' stand at opposite extremes from one another. The thief comes to plunder the poor so they will die. Christ came to bring fullness of life. But it would be a childish kind of Christianity that simply sat back and waited to see whether it was the thief or Christ who came. We are involved in both these undertakings, the plundering and the fullness of life. Either we participate in Christ's mission, or we participate in the thief's plans for the world. As long as we remain merely victims or merely spectators in this struggle for justice, we are supporting the thief and his crimes. By joining in the struggle for a world of greater justice, on the other hand, we are taking part in the plan for creation of the God who has given us this earth in trust that all may have life in fullness.

Life in all its fullness is an impossibility when one is forced to live in absolute poverty. But even in the wealthy first world there is very little fulfilled life to be found, only an ever-growing inner emptiness. What comes between Christ and the middle classes of the first world is not material poverty but spiritual emptiness. The meaninglessness of life perceived by many sensitive individuals ever since the beginning of industrial development has now become a widespread experience among the mass of people in the first world: nothing delights them, nothing moves them deeply, their relationships are superficial and inter-changeable, their hopes and dreams go no further than their next holiday trip. For the majority, work is unsatisfying, pointless, boring. God created us as men and women with a capacity for working and loving. We participate in creation in our work and in our sexuality in the widest sense of the word.

Fullness of life means amongst other things becoming a worker and a lover. For most people in the first world, however, life is more like a long death lingering over many years. It is pain-free: there are pills and to spare, after all; it is feeling-free: 'Don't be so emotional' is an expression of strong disapproval in our language; it is without grace because life is seen as self-achieved and not as a gift from the Creator; it is life without a soul, lived in a world which calculates everything in terms of what it's worth; nothing is beautiful and a source of happiness for its own sake, the only thing that counts is what you can get for it. We are empty and at the same time surfeited with superfluous goods and products. There is an odd relationship between the many objects we possess and consume and the emptiness of our real existence. While Christ came that we might have fullness of life, capitalism came to turn everything into money: that is the long death that looks out at us from so many empty faces. Just think for a moment of a traffic jam, everyone sitting alone inside their own tin can, slowly and aggressively edging their way forward. Frustration and hatred of the people in front and the people behind is the normal reaction. This is an image of life in its emptiness in the rich world.

In the gospel we read the story of the rich young man who seemed to possess fullness of life in the form of many possessions yet is overcome by the inner emptiness of his life. Life has treated him kindly. He has what he needs and much more besides. But his questions go beyond having and being satisfied in this material sense. What shall I do with my life? What must I do to inherit eternal life? How can I make my life more radical, less ambiguous, less fragmented, less of a compromise? What can I do to escape from the half-heartedness of my existence?

Not long ago I saw a letter which might have come from the rich young man's brother, an ordinary member of the white middle-class in Europe. He wrote: "I am thirty-five, a civil servant with a good position, married. We have two children. So far our marriage has been happy. The children are fine. I have everything I need, a secure well-paid job, there's nothing wrong at home. But for all that, recently I haven't been feeling right. I've been feeling more and more that my life is empty. Something is missing, but I don't know what. Sometimes I think I should drop everything and just take off. But I haven't the strength for that. You can't just throw away everything you've worked for." His letter ends with the question, "What shall I do?"

I see these two faces before me, the civil servant from West Germany and the rich young man in the New Testament. They have all they need, yet something is missing. They are not the type of the hardheaded successful male, they are not brutal but if anything rather soft. They have not earned their position and their wealth by fighting and stealing; maligning others or cheating and exploiting them. They probably look after their parents and don't beat their wives. They are polite and disinclined to radicalism of any kind. Both want to do something with their lives, they want to win eternal life. They want to be whole, they want to live unfragmented lives and reflect something of the glory of fullness. But their lives have no glory to reflect. They do not radiate brightness. There is only emptiness and, behind it, the long death.

The evangelist Mark tells us that Jesus looked upon the rich young man and loved him (Mk 10:21). Jesus wants to draw him, and all of us, into fuller life than we have known before. This rich young man, too, could enter into the fullness of life, he is even aware that something is lacking, that he can expect more of life. But there is something radically wrong with his notion of eternal life for he thinks: I have everything, I have obeyed all the rules, there is only one thing missing and that is: the meaning of life, fulfilment. If I can only have that as well everything will be fine.

Jesus turns this expectation upside down: you don't have too little, you have too much. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mk 10:21).

A lot of middle-class people today are searching for a new spirituality. They have a training and a profession, education and a secure income, family and friends but they are looking for something more - religious fulfilment, meaning in life, food for the soul, consolation; all this on top of material security, a religious added value, as it were, for people who are already over-privileged. They are seeking spiritual fullness of life in addition to material fullness, blessing from above in addition to their wealth.

But Jesus rebuffs this pious middle-class hope. Fullness of life does not come when you already have everything. We first have to empty ourselves to receive God's fullness. Give away what you have, give it to the poor then you will have found what you are looking for. The story of the rich young man ends in sorrow; sorrow in the heart of the rich young man, for he is very rich - and he goes away. Perhaps he will become depressive, perhaps he will start drinking, perhaps he will cause an automobile accident. He wouldn't let himself be drawn into more life, fullness of life, sharing of life.

In many towns in West Germany you will see painted on walls the English words 'NO FUTURE'. The people who feel like this are young and energetic; yet they cannot imagine bringing a child into this world, they have stopped planting trees. Life in its fullness, the promise of Christ, produces only a weary smile. Sometimes their sorrow is turned outwards, in aggressiveness, often it is turned inwards, in depression. Life is empty.

Jesus, too, in our story goes sorrowfully on his way. "How hard it will be for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mk 10:23). Fullness of life, the kingdom of God, eternal life, all are destroyed by wealth of possessions, exploitation, injustice. But the rich young man doesn't know this, he is filled with hopeless sorrow and sorrowful hopelessness. Why are so many people in the rich world so empty? With a superfluity of things life itself becomes

superfluous. Among the younger generation in particular today there is a strong and growing desire to break away from dependence on too many possessions. Henry David Thoreau said: "The possibilities of life diminish as so-called 'means' increase. The best thing a rich man can do to preserve his humanity is to realize the dreams he cherished when he was poor." Economics alone cannot explain it: they have everything, people say, what more do they want! I doubt, too, whether individual psychology, that opium of the middle-classes can offer much explanation here. I don't see that we need to know the rich young man's parents and analyse their relationship with their son before we can understand his history with God. What I think we need in fact if we are to understand the empty and meaningless life of the rich, is knowledge of God, theology.

God is the ground of our life: he it was who breathed the breath of life into humankind (Gen 2:7). If we hide ourselves from God behind the barrier of our many possessions so that God cannot touch us, then we die... the long death of the middle classes and also, now, of the elites of third world countries. Wealth acts as a wall more invincible by far than the famous walls of Jericho: We set ourselves apart, we make ourselves untouchable, and our wall is sound-proof so that we cannot hear the cries of the poor and oppressed. Apartheid is not just a political system in an African country; apartheid is a certain way of thinking, feeling and living without being conscious of what is happening around us. There is a way of doing theology in which the poor and economically exploited are never seen or heard - and that is apartheid theology. I am speaking here about my own social class, but I would also want to include all those from other economic situations who pursue the same ideals even though they may not yet have achieved them. Dear sisters and brothers from the third and second worlds, I beg of you: Do not follow our example! Claim back what we have stolen from you, but do not follow us. Otherwise, like the rich young man, you will have sorrowfully to bid farewell to Christ. Do not pursue the idea of 'fullness of life' as we have developed it in the western world. It is a delusion. It separates us from God, it makes us rich... and dead.

The spiritual emptiness of the rich is a result of the economic injustice on which they capitalize. We have chosen a system based on money and violence. The rich young man will have bouts of depression. He cannot change his life he can only make it secure. And he will have to keep making it more and more secure to prevent anything being taken away from him. So he stockpiles weapons; and the mild depression prevailing in so many European and North American churches is tantamount in practice to acquiescence in militarism. They have no hope because they trust in the deadly peace of the arms advocates. Money and violence go together: those who make money their God are bound to make 'security' their state ideology and armaments a political priority.

Some Christians in our countries are saying: What's so bad about safeguarding our security with arms? We're not actually going to use the bomb, just the threat of it. In reality, however, the bomb destroys the fullness of life Christ has promised to us. It destroys the life of the poor in the material sense, the life of the rich in the spiritual sense. It has become lodged inside us, it has taken possession of us. We will never know fullness of life while we live under the bomb which has become the most potent symbol in our world, the thing our politicians research and pay for, love and fear above all else, in other words, their God.

The wealth of the wealthy lies not just in their possessions but also, perhaps more so, in their power to destroy. The world I live in is rich beyond measure in death and ever more sophisticated means of killing. The bombs lying stored ready for use beneath the earth's surface and under the oceans in submarines, the quantities of explosives intended for every human being on earth are, I believe, targeted on God. The meaning of the arms race is this: God is to be eliminated from the earth once and for all. Even the bombs that have not yet been used are directed against God. Militarism is humanity's supreme effort to get rid of God once and for all, to undo creation and prevent redemption leading to fullness of life.

If it is true that a superfluity of things makes life superfluous, then the way to change is to become poorer. "Sell what you have", Jesus tells the rich middle-class young man, "and give to the poor". We cannot fill our inner emptiness with God at no cost to ourselves by some kind of cheap spirituality, as some people seem to imagine. We first have to empty ourselves outwardly of all that overfills us. Becoming empty for God means emptying ourselves and relinquishing, or reducing all the possessions of our world: money and violence. To become poorer and rely less and less on violence, that is the change of heart which leads to fullness of life.

Jesus tried to bring the rich young man to break with his own world, with its attitudes and values, and his own privileged social class. Christ faces us with the same question: How long will you continue to go along with a world order which is based on exploitation and oppression? How long will you continue to benefit from and connive at the system which is dominated by 'the thief who comes to steal, to kill, to destroy'?

Picture captions for page 20:

GLIMPSES FROM THE WCC PRE-ASSEMBLY YOUTH EVENT. Clockwise from upper left:

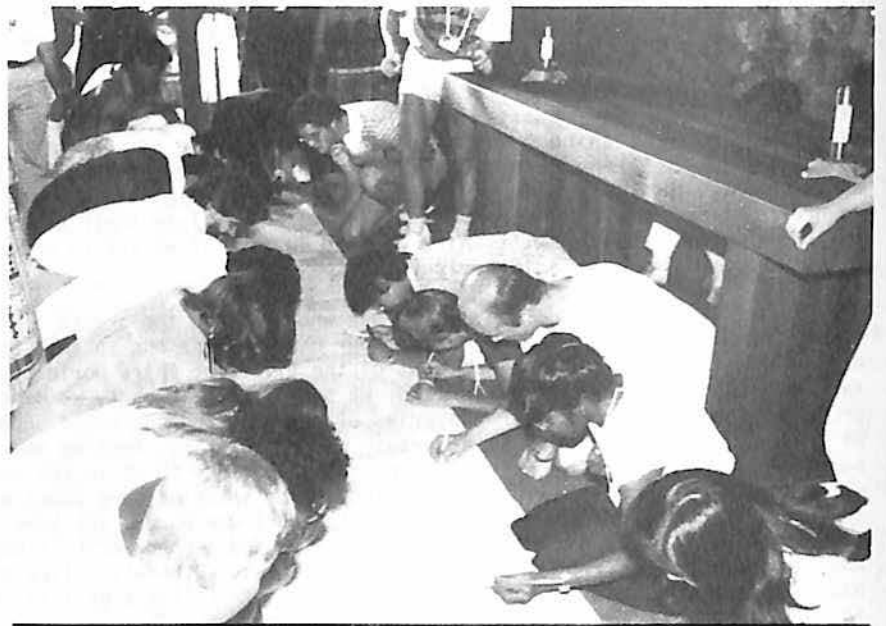
Representatives from the Pacific Islands.

Sharing words and signatures during the opening worship service.

Celebrating together during the Regional Fair.

Indonesian cheers.

Lutheran clowning and a more serious Lutheran.



YOUTH EVENT IN VANCOUVER.

by Alf Idland

In connection with the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver last summer, all the youth delegates and stewards to the Assembly were invited to a special youth event organized by the WCC Youth Sub-Unit. For four-five days prior to the Assembly about 320 young people were wrestling with some of the issues and challenges which later were to face the whole Assembly.

As LWF Youth Coordinator I got a special invitation to attend the Youth Event - though being recognized as a full participant, my real status was more one of an observer. Also other youth and student organizations were represented in a similar way. But for me, being in the midst of the preparations for the Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering in Budapest, the experience was extremely valuable. I therefore think that the preparations for Budapest - as they were continued with the Vancouver experience fresh in mind - have benefited significantly from Vancouver.

In stead of attempting my own evaluation of the event, I think it is more adequate to share some impressions of those who were there either as youth delegates or stewards. The quotations are from a recent issue of the WCC youth newsletter YOUTH:

SETRI NYOMI (Ghana): "3 o'clock Sunday afternoon, July 17th, 1983. I arrived at the Gage Towers of the University of British Columbia Campus. I got into line with several other luggage-pulling folks who were obviously non-Canadian. "I must be at the right place", I felt. The registration process had begun. After going through several other lines, I finally arrived in my room with a bag full of documents and an identity tag.

"Now", I thought, "My long journey from Ghana has finally ended". But how wrong I was. The real journey had only just begun. The opening worship that afternoon ushered us into a new world of new relationships. One could find youths from all parts of the world, worshipping together and talking together - brought together by our common belief in Jesus Christ, who is the Life of the World.

This five-day journey that we took together gave us a good view of what it means to live as Christians in Africa, Latin-America, Asia and Europe among other..."

MATTHIAS SCHMALE (Federal Republic of Germany):
(Matthias stayed in the Department of Communication as assistant to the LWI English Editor for about a year and contributed much to the editing and publishing of this newsletter.)

"Are we different from others just because we are young? Do all young people have the same "refreshing critical attitude towards the establishment?" Do we as young people all think globally and act radically on a local level?

My somewhat pesimistic answer to these questions is "no", at least as far as most of "us professional youth" present at this meeting are concerned. For three days we listened to some very good presentations from African, Asian, Caribbean and Latin American rep-

representatives. We, that is particularly those coming from the "North" were emotionally overwhelmed and we showed our solidarity (a word fast becoming ecumenical jargon) by clapping vigorously after some radical testimonies. I was very surprised at the lack of information particularly among the North American participants. ...When on the fourth day we finally had to sit down to think about what we as youth have to say to the Assembly, suddenly all divisions and differences of political and other points of view became visible. All of sudden it seemed that we were not a homogenous group that is striving to achieve the same goals. Some apparently looked upon this meeting as a starting point of their ecumenical career. Others were not willing to go along with the strong language of those who are hurt most by injustices. Yet others visibly enjoyed the power of standing at the microphone ("eating the microphone", as one of the technicians put it), to accuse and manipulate others mostly in the English language. There was no willingness to listen to each other; to at last "show the solidarity" that we had been talking about for three days...

Despite my disappointment just described I still think there are issues which can and should unite us: in Western Europe we are struggling against racism (Turkish immigrants are treated very badly in my own country, West Germany), we are fighting superpower interference (the US is planning to place a couple of nuclear missiles in our front yard this year) and we are struggling against social injustices in unemployment. Are we not facing the same threatening forces all over the world: the South Africans are fighting US economic involvement and we in Western Europe are struggling against military involvement. It is my hope that the knowledge that in other parts of the world injustices are far greater, will strengthen us to be more determined, more radical in our local involvement in Western Europe without losing a global perspective..."

ROBERTO JORDAN (Argentina): "Of all moments that I lived (both good and bad), the ones that really mattered were the ones in which people were involved; it is through people I experienced the rich process of "learning-teaching", be it in the moving moments of worship and celebration, in work, in parties, even in our "rare" moments of freedom from our tasks. In this process of learning (which so often is difficult and painful) we set out our plans and projects, much was achieved, but because not all was achieved, we need to all reaffirm our commitment to our tasks of priests, prophets, disciples in a world that so often denies the value of life..."

(Quotations from YOUTH, Vol. 7 No 3.)

MESSAGE FROM THE PRE-ASSEMBLY YOUTH EVENT
TO THE WCC SIXTH ASSEMBLY

We are the young people at the WCC Assembly in Vancouver. We have gathered from many churches all over the world to form new relationships, to work together, to share our experiences, and to witness to our faith in Christ who struggles with us, who compels us to act, who unites us, and who gives us life.

We come from Nicaragua, where we struggle for survival and for freedom from United States intervention. We come from Africa, where the reality of poverty, disease and oppression by outside forces, and human justice and dignity is being denied, particularly in South Africa where the heresy of apartheid is being justified as biblical. We come from the Middle East where Lebanon's demands for national sovereignty are being ignored by those who wage war on her soil and where the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland in the occupied territories is being denied. We come from the Pacific, where our home is being turned into a dumping ground for nuclear wastes. We come from Europe, where the deployment of nuclear arms and militarization bring us daily closer to Armageddon. We come from Asia, where transnational corporations abound and militarization rages on supported by the superpowers which results in the unabated violation of human rights and dignity. We come from the Caribbean, where we are caught in the midst of superpower rivalry and foreign intervention which threatens our daily lives. We come from North America, where we are burdened by capitalistic ideals of consumerism and militarism.

We come from many broken churches and broken communities in a broken world. Our world appears to be far from the one body of Jesus Christ. Christ's desire is to reconcile us to God in one body through the cross.

We have come together in Vancouver and among the many issues that confront and concern us, one emerges with compelling urgency. WE WANT PEACE:

NOT as the doctrine of national security defines it: repression, covert violence, the absence of war,
BUT as God's Shalom built on social justice;
NOT as the escalation of nuclear armaments,
BUT as the affirmation of human dignity and the meeting of basic human needs;
NOT as comfort and complacency,
BUT as Gospel-rooted conviction and action.

We recognize that we ourselves are caught up in the structures of oppression and alienation, and at the same time we express our gratitude to God for those of us who are participating in the liberating struggles. We come with anguish and desire to be instruments of the manifest power of the Gospel.

We therefore commit ourselves to participate with the poor and oppressed in their struggle for justice in order to live in peace. To this end we commit ourselves to go beyond mere proclamations and to search with determination for the means of concrete action in our own situations, in community with others, keeping alive the international and cross-confessional friendships we have formed at this meeting.

We challenge each member church through its delegates at this Assembly to work for unity and the realization of these goals. We challenge the WCC Sixth Assembly to reinforce the ecumenical priorities outlined in this statement. The economic crisis should not be permitted to undermine ecumenical programmes for peace and justice. Unjustified criticism should not be permitted to deter concrete and effective action. In this context, the Programme to Combat Racism must be continued. We commend the Study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church, recognizing the dual nature of the oppression of women in society and the barriers to full participation of women in the church. Furthermore, WCC initiatives in the following areas must remain priorities: literacy education and liberation through an ecumenical Christian education; disarmament and the opposition to militarism; human rights; communication networking among world youth.

Together we must move forward in the conviction that the One who wills life, wills it for all. The One who wills life, is our life. The One who kindles our passion for justice and mercy, is the One of whom the scriptures say:

God will judge between many peoples, and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. People will sit under their own vines, and under their own fig trees, and no one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken. All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of the Lord our God, for ever and ever. (Micah 4:3-5)

A FREE COPY OF WSCF JOURNAL ON LUTHER.

In connection with the Luther year 1983 the World Student Christian Federation devoted one of the issues of its quarterly "WSCF Journal" to Martin Luther (1483-1983 A Stock-Taking). The issue contains several interesting articles on the reformator - from different perspectives, and we have at the Youth Desk a few copies to share with those who are interested - FREE OF CHARGE. Just drop a note Youth Desk, P.O. Box No 66, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

Poster / Calendar Contest

The General Assembly of the United Nations has designated 1985 as

International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace

As part of the contribution towards it, the Sub-Unit on Youth of the World Council of Churches (WCC) invites *YOUNG ARTISTS* (born after 31 December 1952) everywhere to submit poster-calendar design interpreting the IYY theme.

A first prize of SFr. 2.000.— and three honorable mentions will be awarded by a special international jury. The prize winning poster will be published in *ONE WORLD*, a monthly magazine of the World Council of Churches, as a special insert and distributed internationally. The designs may also be used as magazine and book covers, article illustrations and art exhibits.

The WCC reserves sole rights for the publication of all designs, unless otherwise stated by the artist at the time of submission. All due care will be given to entries, but the WCC accepts no liability for their loss or damage.

The WCC will retain all designs, unless otherwise requested, in which case an addressed label and correct postage must be included.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- Each poster must carry the following :
 - the words : INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR : Participation, Development, Peace.
 - either version of the WCC symbol as shown below.
 - the whole 1985 calendar year.
- Posters may be in full or limited colour.
- Photography and collage may be used as well as any form of painting, drawing and design.
- Posters should be submitted in the "A 2" format (42 cm × 62 cm; 17" × 24,5"). Consideration should be given to the possibility of the designs being reproduced in smaller or larger format.
- Each poster design must carry a label on the back with the artist's name, address and date of birth.
- Works submitted on illustration board are preferred but they may be sent in mailing tubes if this does not damage the design or make it difficult to exhibit.

Designs should be received at the following address before July 1, 1984 :

IYY Poster Contest
WCC Sub-Unit on Youth
150, route de Ferney
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland



INJUSTICES CAUSED BY IMMIGRATION LAWS.

Students successfully fought for the "come-back" to Norway of expelled student.

by Alf Idland.

ONE DAY JUSTICE WILL PREVAIL. ONE DAY WE SHALL DANSE, WE SHALL CELEBRATE. PEACE IS WON, HAPPINESS IS FOUND.

The arrival hall at Fornebu airport, Oslo, was filled with triumphant singing a Friday afternoon in October last year. A group of about 130 students from the Rönningen Folk High School were singing while waiting impatiently. Other passengers arriving, were obviously wondering what kind of celebrity was expected. But probably few had the slightest idea that they were witnessing the happy-ending of a drama that had started four weeks earlier. Then the Norwegian Immigration Police had suddenly struck and brutally expelled a fellow student of the group, Ashram Ali from Pakistan, because his application for visa had been rejected.

It was a Thursday afternoon in September when all of a sudden three policemen in civilian clothes arrived at Rönningen Folk High School to announce that Ali had been refused a visa to stay in Norway. He was immediately taken to the police station where he was kept during the night. The next morning he was taken back to the school and given only a short time to pack his belongings, but without being allowed to contact the principal of the school or an attorney for legal assistance - although he has the right to such assistance.

he was then later the same day put on a plane and sent to Hamburg. Since he had previously stayed in the Federal Republic of Germany and had tried to apply for visa, the authorities had agreed that he could be transported back to the country at least temporarily.

back at Rönningen 130 students had suddenly got a glimpse of the ugly realities of Norwegian immigration laws, and they decided to fight back and help their fellow student and friend. For they knew that if he was sent back to Pakistan, he might be in grave danger - even in danger of his life. As a former political activist in his home country with connection to the Butto party, he was a political dissident blacklisted by the authorities.

The students organized themselves to use all means available for the battle to get Ali back to Norway. Monday morning's newspapers carried the story about Ali. "Out of the country without warning - without mercy" announced the headline of the front page article in the Oslo daily Vaart Land. The same morning, at 7.30 a.m., a group of four students invaded the Ministry of Justice to protest the expulsion. Although they did not meet the Minister of Justice, Ms. Iona Rokke, they were received by the State-secretary of the Ministry. Also members of the Storting (Parliament) were contacted. Amnesty International was brought into the picture, and another group of students went to the German embassy with pleas of not sending Ali back to Pakistan before Norwegian authorities had re-

considered Ali's case.

The activities of the students resulted in what Vaart Land called a "storm against the Police". And the same newspaper probably reflected many people's reactions in its editorial on the expulsion: "Now it is enough. The Immigration Police has lately exceeded the limit of tolerance towards its lack of human decency in expulsion cases... ..We have no more confidence in the Immigration Police..."

The Police can only reestablish this confidence by a correct and human behaviour..." In the meantime the students succeeded in obtaining from the Ministry of Justice a guarantee that nothing would happen to Ali as a result of his expulsion. Both the Norwegian Prime Minister, Mr. Kaare Willock and the Minister of Church Affairs took direct contact with the Minister of Justice concerning the case. In response to the pressure from the students who had managed to involve all the Folk High Schools behind them and were threatening with an education boycott, the Prime Minister wrote a personal letter to the Rønningen students expressing his agreement "in questioning the methods which have been applied (in expelling Ali)". This gave new hope before the Minister of Justice finally on September 31 ruled that Ali could come back to Norway in order to complete his year at Rønningen. The Minister stressed that the realities of the case - not the pressure - had caused the decision. Attendance at a school is a sufficient reason for issuing a visa to stay in Norway.

Finally on October 7 the students were gathered at Fornebu to be reunited with Ali for whom they so wholeheartedly had waged a long battle and won. A tired and happy Ali finally appeared. He was greeted with applause and embrace, and the words WELCOME HOME!

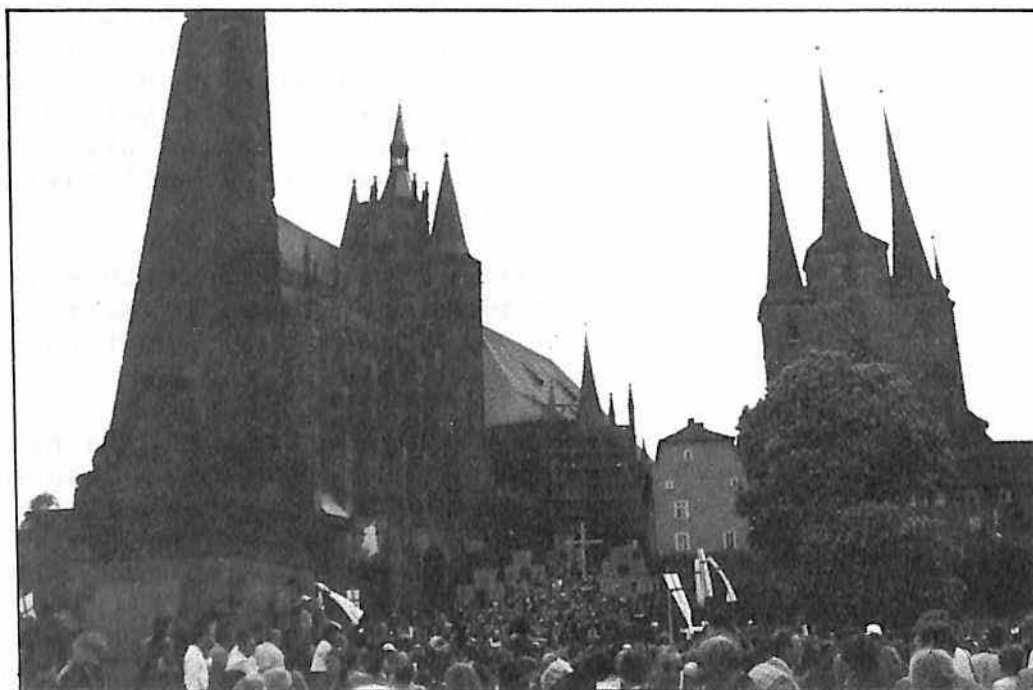
But the result of the battle was not only a happy reunion for Ali and his fellow students at Rønningen. The case has already had its impact: The way in which the Immigration Police and the bureaucracy acted when Ali was expelled, has been duly criticized. The methods of the Police will be thoroughly reexamined. And the Minister of Justice has promised that the routines of the Ministry will be examined and discussed. The Prime Minister and members of the Storting have become involved in the case - which will probably help when a revision of the immigration laws is to be taken up by the legislators in the near future.

Vaart Land certainly turned the light on the right spot in its final editorial on the case: "...We would like to remind about the danger of 'shooting the pianist' in connection with the Ali-case. The Immigration Police ought to have a well-deserved reprimand. But the politicians of the Storting also have to take their responsibility for the injustices against helpless individuals, which this case has proved can happen.

It cannot be accepted in the long run that members of the Storting only stand up to fight for individuals among the immigrants and these individual cases are a result of the laws the politicians themselves have voted for".



From the GDR:
Top & Middle - Kirchentag
celebrations in Erfurt
Bottom: youth group eagerly
learning Japanese origami



Glimpses from the joint National Convention of the Lutheran Student Movements in Canada and the US

Discovering WHO'S MY NEIGHBOR?



Former LSM-US President, Jean McCreery, chairing



LSM-US staff getting a deserved thanks



The Canada movement members conducting business in a relaxed mood



Reporting from
visitation team
to Zimbabwe

ASIA PRE-ASSEMBLY CONSULTATION YOUTH REPORT

Nov. 17-25, 1983 Indonesia

The Role of Youth in the Church

We would like to affirm the fact that youth are not a separate entity in the Church, but are part and parcel of the Body of Christ. We are mindful of the problems and needs faced by the youth of our churches, and we recognize the tremendous tasks and challenges that lie ahead of youth with respect to the Church's ministry. Youth feel challenged to serve, and request that due consideration and consent be given to their proposals.

We recommend to the churches:

- 1) That in order to strengthen youth ministry, more youth leaders should be trained through regular leadership programs and training camps.
- 2) That sometimes our traditional Lutheran practices and methods need to be challenged as we encounter youth work in other traditions. We therefore commit ourselves to a willingness to learn from other Christians, and we request that such encounters be encouraged.
- 3) That while we recognize the efforts of our elders in serving the Church, we also note the presence of many outstanding and dedicated young people. We suggest that dialogues regularly take place between the various age groups, and that retreats be held for pastors and youth leaders for the purpose of overcoming misunderstandings and making for greater cooperation.
- 4) That mature young people be given the opportunity to serve the local congregation, especially also in taking a leading part in the conducting of services.
- 5) That exchange programs be worked out with the help of the LWF, so that youth may get to know different cultures and concerns by visiting other countries. We believe that such visits would be of mutual benefit.
- 6) That youth be represented wherever possible in the decision-making bodies of the Church at all levels, thus enabling them through these opportunities and experiences to become responsible leaders at local and national levels.
- 7) That the various churches respond to the need for fulltime youth workers and national youth committees.
- 8) That it be noted that older youth (e.g. 21-35 years) may have interests and needs which differ from those of younger youth who are mainly students. Such needs should be taken into account in our ministry to all youth, but without artificially dividing them into various categories.
- 9) That notice be taken of the help often required by rural youth when they come into urban society for the purposes of study or employment.
- 10) That churches and national youth committees be requested to notify the Youth Desk of the LWF to communicate directly with the respective youth directors in the Churches, with a copy of such communication to the respective church leaders and national committees. This will make for a smoother flow of communication.
- 11) That youth be provided with opportunities for gaining in-depth understanding of the changing trends in the political scene on national and international levels through study and other exposure.

We recommend to the LWF:

- 1) That a Youth Consultant for Asia be appointed to handle regional youth co-ordination with regard to materials and other resources. This is regarded as very important.
- 2) That the LWF provide study-exchange programs on a regional level.
- 3) That the LWF study the possibility of holding a large-scale Youth Leaders' Conference for Asia in 1985, which has been designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Youth.
- 4) That the LWF study the possibility of sponsoring regional consultations on current issues related to church and society for young men and women who are working in various professional and executive fields.

(Rev. Julius Paul, former LWF Intern from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia-Singapore, led the discussion on youth at the consultation. He was joined by Rev. Shalem Raju, UELCI in India; Marisi Marbun, HKBP, Rev. O.H. Simanungkalit, GKPI, Rev. Bondar Sumbayak, GKPS, and Evan Panjaitan, HKI, all from Indonesia. These Youth Consultants had all participated in previous Youth Leaders' Conferences in Asia.)

DAS GEWISSEN ENTSCHIEDET - ERINNERUNGEN AN DIE GESCHWISTER SCHOLL

by Markus Göldner.

Donnerstag, 18.2.1943: Deutschland befindet sich in der dunkelsten Phase seiner Geschichte. Während in allen Teilen Europas durch einen von Hitler geführten Krieg Soldaten und Zivilisten sterben, versuchen die Nationalsozialisten im Inneren des Landes, durch Verfolgung und Unterdrückung den Widerstand der Bevölkerung gegen das Regime zu brechen. Das Verfassen, Herstellen und Verbreiten von Flugblättern gilt als Hochverrat. An diesem Tag befinden sich Sophie Scholl, 22 Jahre alt und Studentin der Biologie und ihr Bruder Hans Scholl, 25 Jahre alt und Student der Medizin, mit Hektographen unterwegs auf den Fluren und Treppen des Hauptgebäudes der Münchner Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität.

Sie legen in der Stille der Vormittagsvorlesungen die Blätter auf Stufen und Balustraden. Als sie die restlichen Flugblätter vom obersten Stock in die Eingangshalle der Universität hinabwerfen, werden sie vom Hausmeister gesehen, der die Gestapo (geheime Staatspolizei) alarmiert. Am 22.2.1943 wird den Geschwistern sowie ihrem Freund Christoph Propst durch den "deutschen Volksgerichtshof" des Präsidenten Roland Freisler der Prozess gemacht. Die Urteile stützen sich unter anderem auf "Feindbegünstigung" (Paragraph 91 StGB) und Wehrkraftzersetzung (Paragraph 5 Sonderstrafrechtsverordnung). Die drei Freunde wurden am gleichen Tag durch Fallbeil hingerichtet.

Warum geht uns auch 40 Jahre nach diesem Ereignis das Leben dieser Studenten noch etwas an? Sollte man nicht die national-sozialistischen Vergehen vergessen, zumal wir jungen Deutschen in Ost und West weder direkt noch indirekt daran beteiligt waren? Es ist dennoch wichtig, sich das Wirken der Geschwister Scholl näher zu betrachten und die Gründe für ihre Widerstandsarbeit zu untersuchen, damit wir Wohlstandskinder entdecken, dass sie für etwas starben, was wir in Westdeutschland als das Selbstverständlichste ansehen - zu sagen, zu lesen und anzuschauen, was wir für schön, wissenschaftlich und wahrhaftig halten. Und zu protestieren, wenn uns etwas nicht passt, also die Freiheit der Gedanken und Worte.

Aber wieso sind gerade diese jungen Menschen exemplarisch aus der Widerstandsbewegung im Dritten Reich hervorzuheben. Wie viele Arbeiter, Gewerkschafter und bekennende Kommunisten verschwanden in den Konzentrationslagern, ohne dass man ihrer in einer solchen Form gedenkt? Was jedoch diese Studentengruppen von anderen Widerstandsbewegungen abhebt, ist das Phänomen, dass sich junge Menschen gegen ein System erhoben, von dem sie weitgehend geprägt und beeinflusst waren. Die Scholl-Kinder waren in ihrer Schulzeit begeisterte Anhänger des Nationalsozialismus gewesen und formierten sich in deren Jugendorganisationen, der Hitler-Jugend oder des Bundes Deutscher Mädel. Inge Scholl, die Schwester von Sophie und Hans schreibt in ihrem Buch, "Die Weisse Rose":

"Hitler, so hörten wir überall, Hitler wolle diesem Vaterland zu Größe, Glück und Wohlstand verhelfen, er wolle sorgen, dass jeder Arbeit und Brot habe, wir fanden das gut und was immer wir dazu

beitragen konnten, wollten wir tun." Sie fanden Gefallen an den "kompakt marschierenden Kolonnen der Jugend mit ihren wehenden Fahnen, war das nicht etwas Ueberwältigendes, diese Gemeinschaft? Aber erst als Studenten - im erwachenden kritischen Bewusstsein - sollte sich ihre Haltung ändern. Sie wurden damit konfrontiert, dass Stefan Zweig und Heinrich Heine nicht mehr gelesen werden durften. Auch die wegen ihrer "Entartung" von den Nazis verbotene Kunst und ihr Vergleich mit den offiziell genehmigten Naziwerken schärften in ihnen ihr Bild von diesem Regime, das nur Konformität duldete. Ihr Vater wurde wegen einer zu etwas lauten Aeussierung gegen Hitler - er nannte ihn eine Gottesgeissel der Menschheit - angezeigt, eingesperrt und später zu vier Monaten Gefängnis verurteilt. Spätestens von diesem Zeitpunkt an spürte die Familie, dass sie wie ohnmächtig diesem System gegenüberstanden. So konnten die Scholl-Kinder nicht mehr tatenlos hinnehmen, dass sie in einem Staat leben mussten, in dem die Unfreiheit, der Hass und die Lüge zum Normalzustand geworden waren.

Unter den vielen angepassten und das nationalsozialistische Gedankengut verfolgenden Professoren fanden die Studenten an der Münchner Universität einen, der sich kritisch mit allen Fragen auseinandersetzen wollte. Es war Professor Huber, Sophies Lehrer in Philosophie. Er las über Theodizee, die Rechtfertigung Gottes in der Sicht der Existenz des Bösen. Das Thema in dieser Gegenwart, "die sich nicht nur über Gottes Ordnung hinwegsetzen, sondern Gott selbst ausmerzen wollte", verschaffte den kritischen jungen Leuten endlich eine Diskussionsbasis, nach der sie so lange suchten.

Um Professor Huber bildete sich später die "WEISSE ROSE", wie sich die Widerstandsgruppe nannte, in der Hans Scholl die Funktion des Koordinators übernahm. In einer ihren geheimen Sitzungen sagte Huber über die "Weisse Rose": "Unsere Aufgabe wird es sein, die Wahrheit so deutlich und hörbar als möglich hinauszurufen in die deutsche Nacht. Die Einzelnen, die vereinsamt und isoliert gegen Hitler stehen, müssen spüren, dass eine grosse Schar Gleichgesinnter mit ihnen ist".

Als Hans 1942 aus Russland wiederkam, sah er "noch eindringlicher und klarer die Notwendigkeit, diesem Staat mit seinem furchtbaren Vernichtungswahn entgegenzutreten". Er musste erleben, wie Tausende seiner Kameraden sinnlos in den Tod geschickt wurden und kam zu dem Schluss, dass er sein Leben lieber gegen die "Ungechtigkeiten, die zum Himmel schreien" einsetzen wollte.

Die nächsten Monate war die "Weisse Rose" damit beschäftigt, Flugblätter in vermehrter Zahl zu verteilen, in denen sie zum passiven Widerstand gegen Hitler aufriefen. Hans gelang es, die Fassaden der Ludwigstrasse in München mit dem Aufruf "Nieder mit Hitler" zu bemalen.

Anfang 1943 erhielt Hans die Warnung, dass die Gestapo ihm auf der Spur sei und, obwohl er die Möglichkeit hatte, sich ins Ausland abzusetzen, entschloss er sich, bis zum Ende weiterzuarbeiten.

Die Früchte ihrer Arbeit trugen sie auch in andere Städte Deutschlands hinein. In Berlin, Freiburg und Hamburg bildeten sich erste studentische Widerstandsgruppen, bis am 18. Februar 1943 alles sein Ende fand. Professor Huber wird kurze Zeit später nach Sophie, Hans und ihrem Freund Christoph festgenommen. In der Haft kurz vor seiner Hinrichtung schrieb er sein "Schlusswort des Angeklagten": "Es gibt für alle äussere Legalität eine letzte Grenze, wo sie unwahrhaftig und unsittlich wird. Dann nämlich, wenn sie zum Deckmantel einer Feigheit wird, die sich nicht getraut, gegen offenkundige Rechtsverletzung aufzutreten". Kann aber denen, die damals um die Rechtsverletzungen des Systems wussten und nicht in den Widerstand gingen, dieser Vorwurf der Feigheit treffen? Ohne Zweifel wird man zugeben müssen, dass die meisten im Angesicht des Todes oder des Kerkers, im Angesicht des teuflischen Richters des Volksgerichtshofes, ihre wahre Gesinnung verbergen würden, um ihres Lebens und der Zukunft willen.

"Diese jungen Menschen mussten sterben, weil sie es wagten, aufzustehen gegen eine organisierte Mörderbande, weil sie diesen sinnlosen Krieg beenden wollten", wie Else Gebel, die Mitgefängene von Sophie in ihren letzten Tagen, sagte. Wir, die wir diese Kraft nicht aufbringen könnten und gewohnt sind, in der Masse mitzuschwimmen, müssen uns fragen, woher diese Studenten ihre Kraft und ihren Mut nahmen. Um eine Antwort zu finden, zitiere ich die Worte ihrer Schwester Inge: "Dann blieb ihnen nichts mehr, als tief in ihr eigenes Herz hinabzusteigen, dorthin, wo ihnen eine Stimme sagt, dass sie Recht taten, und dass sie es tun mussten, auch wenn sie ganz allein in der Welt stünden; ich glaube, in solchen Student haben sie frei mit Gott sprechen können, mit ihm, dem sie tastend in ihrer Jugend nachgingen."

Unabhängig davon, ob wir ihren Kampf als rein politischen oder menschlich-moralisch-religiösen bezeichnen wollten, so geben uns die Worte Sophies in ihren letzten Tagen die Gewissheit, dass Gott in ihrem Leben und Wirken eine wichtige Rolle gespielt hat: "Viele Menschen glauben von unserer Zeit, dass sie die letzte sei. All die schrecklichen Zeichen können es glauben machen. Aber ist dieser Glaube nicht von nebensächlicher Bedeutung? Denn muss nicht jeder Mensch einerlei in welcher Zeit er lebt, dauernd damit rechnen, im nächsten Augenblick zur Rechenschaft gezogen zu werden? Ich kann es nicht verstehen, wie heute viele "fromme" Leute fürchten um die Existenz Gottes, weil die Menschen seine Spuren mit Schwert und schändlichen Taten verfolgen, als habe Gott nicht die Macht, ich spüre wie alles in seiner Macht liegt. Fürchten muss man bloss um die Existenz der Menschen, weil sie sich von ihm abwenden, der ihr Leben ist."

Ich habe mir die Frage gestellt, ob die Arbeit der "Weissen Rose", das persönliche Engagement von Hans und seiner Schwester und ihren Freunden nicht ein sinnloser, ja selbstmörderischer Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus war. Um eine Antwort zu finden, kann man die Worte Golo Manns anführen: "Sie fochten gegen das Riesenfeuer mit blossen Händen, mit ihrem Glauben, ihrem armseligen Vervielfältigungsapparat, gegen die Allgewalt des Staates. Gut konnte das nicht ausgehen, und ihre Zeit war kurz. Hätte es aber im deutschen

Widerstand nur sie gegeben, die Geschwister Scholl und ihre Freunde, so hätten sie allein genügt, um etwas von der Ehre des Menschen zu retten, welcher die deutsche Sprache spricht."

Ich meine, das Beispiel der Geschwister Scholl sollte uns jungen Christen Mut machen, einmal anzufangen oder fortzufahren in unserem Bemühen, gegen die Ungerechtigkeiten in der ganzen Welt trotz bestehender Hindernisse zu kämpfen.

(Zitate aus "Die Weisse Rose" von Inge Scholl)

The Conscience decided - in memory of the Brother and Sister Scholl - by Markus Göldner
English translation: Birgitta Voltenauer

Thursday, February 18, 1943: Germany is in the darkest phase of its history. While soldiers and civilians are dying all over Europe because of the war caused by Hitler, the National Socialist Party in the country is trying to break the resistance of the population against the regime by persecuting and oppressing them. The editing, establishing and distributing of leaflets is looked upon as high treason. On this day Sophie Scholl, 22 years of age and a student of biology, and her brother Hans Scholl, 25 years of age and a student of medicine, are in the hallways and stairs of the main building of the Ludwig-Maximilian-University in Munich with leaflets. In the quiet of the morning lectures they distribute these leaflets on the stairs. As they are throwing the rest of the leaflets from the first floor down into the main hall, the janitor sees them and informs the Gestapo (secret state police).

On the 22nd of February 1943 legal action was brought against the brother and sister as well as against their friend Christoph Propst by the "German People's Court of Justice" under its President, Roland Freisler. The judgments were based on "giving advantage to an enemy" and "undermining of military power". That same day the three friends were executed by guillotine.

Why do the lives of these students still concern us 40 years after their death? Should one not try and forget the crimes of the National Socialist Party, especially since most of us did not take part in it directly nor indirectly? Nevertheless, it is important to consider further the activities of the brother and sister Scholl and examine the reasons for their opposition so that we can understand that they died for something that many take for granted - to speak, to read and to look at what we find beautiful, worth knowing and truthful. And to protest when there is something with which we cannot agree, that is freedom of thought and words.

But why are these young people pointed out as an example of the Resistance Movement in the Third Reich? How many workers, trade-unionists and confessed communists disappeared in the concentration camps without being remembered in this way? The reason why these student groups stand out against other Resistance Movements is the phenomenon that young people opposed a system that, to a large extent, had impressed and influenced them. During their school days the Scholl children were enthusiastic fans of National

The Conscience decided..(cont.)

Socialism and engaged themselves in its youth organisations, the Hitler youth and the Federation of German Girls. Inge Scholl, the sister of Sophie and Hans wrote in her book "The White Rose": "We heard everywhere that Hitler wanted to help this native country to Greatness, Happiness, and Affluency, he wanted to provide Work and Bread for everybody; we found this good and whatever we could do to help we wanted to do." They liked the "compact marching columns of youth with their waving flags: was that not something overwhelming, this public spirit?"

Only as students - when their critical conscience awoke - did they change their attitude. They were confronted with this problem when they were not allowed to read Stefan Zweig and Heinrich Heine. Also the art that was forbidden by the Nazis because of its degeneration and the comparison with the officially allowed naziaart sharpened their picture of this regime that only allowed conformity. Their father was denounced, arrested and later condemned to four months of prison because of a too loud declaration against Hitler - he called him a scourge of God to humanity. From now on the family felt that they were powerless against this system. The Scholl children could no longer inactively tolerate living in a state where constraint, hate and lying had become a normality.

Among the many adjusted professors and followers of the national socialism, the students of the university in Munich found one who was critical of all these questions. It was Professor Huber, Sophie's teacher of philosophy. He was reading about theodicy, the justification of God in view of the existence of evil. This theme, "which does not only want to ignore God but also eliminate him", finally gave the critical young people a basis for discussion which they had long been looking for. Around Professor Huber the "White Rose" was established, e.g. the Resistance Movement in which Hans Scholl took on the duty of coordinator. In one of its secret sessions, Huber said of the "White Rose" that: "One of our tasks will be to call out the truth as loudly and clearly as possible into the German night. The individuals, who stand alone and isolated against Hitler should feel that a large group of like-minded people are with them."

In 1942, when Hans came back from Russia, he saw with "even more urgency and clarity the necessity of opposing this State with its awful extermination mania." He had to experience how thousands of his friends were sent to a meaningless death and realized that he would rather risk his life opposing "the injustice that is a crying shame." The next few weeks the "White Rose" was busy distributing an increasing number of leaflets in which they encouraged a passive opposition against Hitler. Hans managed to paint the facades of the Ludwigstrasse in Munich with the appeal "Down with Hitler."

In the beginning of 1943 Hans received a warning that the Gestapo was on his track and, although he had the possibility to escape abroad, he decided to stay and work till the end.

The fruit of their labour was also spread to other cities in Germany. In Berlin, Freiburg and Hamburg resistance movements were established until the 18th of February when all ended. Professor

The Conscience decided..(cont.)

Huber was arrested shortly after Sophie, Hans and their friend Christoph. In prison, shortly before he was executed, he wrote his "Final Word of the Accused": "In all external legality there is a last limit where it becomes untruthful and immoral. That is when it disguises a cowardice that dare not protest against obvious infringements of the law." But should we reproach those of cowardice who knew about the infringements of the system at the time and still did not enter the Resistance? No doubt, you would have to agree that most people would hide their real attitude, when facing the devilish judges of the People's Court of Justice, to save their lives and future.

"These young people had to die because they had the courage to stand up against an organized murder gang and because they wanted to stop this meaningless war", said Else Gebel, a co-prisoner of Sophie's during her last days. We, who could not muster up this strength and are used to drifting along with the masses, have to ask ourselves where these students gathered their strenght and courage. To find an answer I will quote the words of their sister Inge: "Then nothing else was left for them to do but look deep down into their own hearts, down to where a voice told them that they were doing the right thing and that they had to do it even if they were all alone in the world; I think that in hours like these they could talk freely with God whom they had tentatively been seeking during their youth."

Irrespective of whether we specify their battle as purely political or human-moral-religious, the words of Sophie during her last days give us the assurance that God played an important role in her life and activity: "Many people believe that our time is the last one. All these terrible signs could make you believe it. But is this belief not of immaterial importance? Because must not everybody, no matter when he lives, always be prepared to be called to account at any time? I cannot understand why today many "pious" people fear for the existence of God, because people follow His tracks with swords and shameful actions as if God did not have the Power; I feel how everything is in His power. You need only fear the existence of people because they turn away from Him who is their life."

We might ask ourselves whether the work of the "White Rose", the personal engagement of Hans, his sister and their friends was not a meaningless, even suicidal battle against national socialism. To find an answer, we could quote Golo Mann: "They fought against the huge fire with their bare hands, with their belief, their shabby photocopying machine, against the omnipotence of the State. This could not end well and their time was short. But if there were only the brother and sister Scholl and their friends in the German Resistance, it would have been enough to save something of the honour of the people who speak the German language."

The example of the brother and sister Scholl should give young Christians the courage to start or to continue in our efforts to fight against injustice in the whole world in spite of existing obstacles.

(Quotes from "The White Rose" by Inge Scholl)

The following is quoted from the Lutheran World Information, July 1983

U S PEACE GROUP POSTS 9.5 THESES ON WITTENBERG CHURCH DOOR

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WEST BERLIN, July 28 (lc) -- A group of 21 people from five nations committed to the cause of peace took a door out of history on July 2 when they briefly posted "9.5 theses for peace" to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church, where Martin Luther posted his 95 theses against abuses of the Roman Catholic Church in 1517.

At Wittenberg, in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the Lutheran World Ministries (LWM)-sponsored group posted their theses "calling themselves to faithfulness" on the peace issue. "We pledge ourselves to oppose all weapons of mass destruction by any means compatible with the gospel and oppose further escalation of the nuclear arms race through the deployment of the Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe," said one of the theses. The group, which ranged in ages from 18 to 79 years and included several people belonging to the US Lutheran Peace Fellowship, quoted the first of Luther's 95 theses, which said: "When our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to turn to him in repentance, he asks that the whole of our life be one of penitence." The group, in turn, said: "We pledge ourselves to daily renewal through self-examination, penitence and affirmation of our baptismal covenant."

In another thesis, the group said: "pledge ourselves to dare to trust to refuse to hate the one called 'enemy.'" The members of the group came mostly from the United States, although there was one participant each from Canada, Sweden, France and Finland.

Beginning with the Hanover Kirchentag in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) on June 8, the group traveled to Czechoslovakia, Finland, the Soviet Union, Poland, the GDR and the FRG. They ended their trip here on July 4 with a festive Eucharist, followed by a lively dinner. At the outdoor Eucharistic service, one member of the group, noting the July 4 Independence Day celebration, said Christians are called to greater "interdependence" with one another. In interviews with more than half the members of the group, the participants generally felt the trip helped them understand the urgency of the peace movement in Europe, which has experienced more directly the ravages of war.

"The peace movement here has so much integrity because these people know from their own experience what war is about," said Darlene Grega, 28, campus minister at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. On Aug. 1, Grega will begin work as director of LWM's office of international scholarship and exchange. The Rev. Dennis Jacobsen, 35, of Jersey City, New Jersey, helped organize the trip as coordinator of the Lutheran Peace Fellowship, an independent group formed during World War II. The peace fellowship is becoming increasingly visible with recent calls for tax resistance and putting together 95 theses of its own for peace in this year, which is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's birth. For Jacobsen, the personal highlight of the trip came at a Baptist church in Moscow when he preached on peace. The sermon was received with enthusiasm, according to the group members, particularly by the older women in the congregation.

Jacobsen and others said that at virtually every point in the trip the people with whom the group met severely criticized President Reagan's speech last spring to Protestants in Orlando, Florida, in which he called the Soviet Union the embodiment of evil. "For most of the people; in both East and West, the US was synonymous with Ronald Reagan," said Thomas Witt, 26, winter program director of Holden Village, Washington, a Christian community specializing in adult education and the arts.

The body of Christ is stronger than any nationalistic symbols ... if we aim these weapons at one another, we are aiming it at our own body--if we are the body of Christ," said Witt. Dr. Paul Wee, general secretary of LWM (the USA national committee of the Lutheran World Federation), said the group maintained a critical position toward the peace activities of all governments. "There were times we angered our Soviet hosts by pointed questions concerning Afghanistan, Poland, Ethiopia and individuals presently in prison for their critique of Soviet institutions," said Wee. "At the same time, it is our unanimous conviction that the greater threat to the nuclear holocaust comes not so much from the USSR as from the Reagan government," he said. "The question for us as Christians is whether we can live with integrity on the basis of an 'eye for an eye and a bomb for a bomb,'" said Wee.

One of the more inspiring members of the group, according to some participants, was 79-year-old Ruth Youngdahl Nelson of Minneapolis, a peace activist who was arrested last year for trying to block the nuclear-powered Trident submarine from entering a US navy base in Bangor, Washington. Nelson said the trip confirmed for her what she already believed: the great need for people on each side "to know each other." She said there are four steps to peace: "The first thing is to begin by praying for God's intervention. The second thing is to get informed. The third thing is to act. The fourth thing is to have faith."

Eva Christina Hansson, a 25-year-old church worker from Uppsala, Sweden, offered a European perspective on how sometimes limited is the American view of "their God-given freedoms." She said, "There was a lot of talk about freedom but no definition of freedom: if freedom means the opportunity to choose between 15 different types of toothpaste, I want more than that." In the group's 9.5 theses, an attempt was made to define their own freedom. "We find no security in weapons of mass destruction and pledge ourselves to reject the language of threat and the weapons which continue to create a pervasive fear of a new holocaust," said one of the theses. The group managed not to complete its last thesis on purpose, making it a half thesis. It reads: "Peace is more than the absence of war. It is the presence of justice. As long as there is injustice in the world, the work of peace is incomplete."

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PEACE STUDY TRIP

(Note: the following comments are quoted from various individual reports on the trip.)

Various Reflections

"Many people I talked with closely associated their opinions about this country with Ronald Reagan's world view, and our willingness to use Europe as a nuclear battleground. I spent much of my time in Europe explaining to people that there were some people in the U.S. who did not think like Ronald Reagan."

"In the Eastern bloc countries, the church is confronted with militant atheism; the lines of separation are drawn very clearly. But in the U.S. there is the danger of hidden atheism. Which is more dangerous to the church?"

"The church is surviving in socialism. They do not need advice from the Western world on how to be the church. Rather, they need contact with U.S. churches so that we will finally learn from them and understand how they too are being faithful in their own situation."

"We were challenged to look at our own values, our churches, our country. We became aware of how little we really practice what our Lord taught: how often our spiritual integrity was hypocritical; how we need honest communication on all levels; how Christ's love (even for the so-called enemy) can bridge any chasm. I came away humbled, repentant, and eager to share with my countrymen that the way to peace can never be in the buildup of horrible arms to kill, but in Christ's way of concern for all people."

"(There) were people who recognized the reality of a new social and political condition and were attempting to find the church's place in that new situation. They asked us to understand the new situation more fully before we criticize them or their governments or offered our help to these churches."

Hannover Kirchentag

"The urgency of the issue in Europe electrified the Kirchentag. The theme, "Return to Life", was ubiquitous - on banners, buttons, worn by young and old on violet scarves, and often coupled with the words "the time is now for a no without any yes to weapons of mass destruction." We could not help but share in their sense of urgency."

"I will never forget walking with thousands of others in a peace demonstration that wound through the streets of Hannover and ended with an agape feast attended by 100,000 people and led by church leaders from both east and west: That was the first of several instances of dancing and singing that both celebrated and manifested the oneness of Christ's body."

Overcoming Barriers

"I cannot stress too much the importance of these contacts, for their gift of courage to us, for the heightened sense of church which is stronger than any mythology of enemy. One Estonian youth said: "If every American had a Soviet friend, we would never have a war." Based on our experience, I believed her. And I see the

unique ability of the church to make such exchange and friendship possible in a time of intensive propaganda from both governments."

"I realized then that after five weeks of active travel in Eastern Europe I had yet to find the "enemy."

"Although the more formal contacts were productive and informative, it was meeting with the young people that made our stay in Tallinn most memorable. We spent hours together in worship and song, discussing into the early morning hours our concerns, our faith, and the separate realities in which we lived them out. I was struck by the degree of hope and meaning the church embodied in them, and by their willingness to risk for their faith."

"Why do we struggle against the insight voiced so eloquently by the Apostle Paul? There is no dividing wall; it has been broken by God's act in Christ."

"This study trip has helped me to understand the people of Europe more fully, to meet those who have been called "enemy" and realize that we need not be enemies, and to accept their struggles to be the church in a new situation."

The Cost of Discipleship

"In Estonia and the DDR we learned about the price (from a worldly point of view) that one must pay to openly profess one's faith; but by the same token, the beauty and strength of that faith under difficult conditions."

"A faithful church at the edge of society sometimes is more free and independent and has more room to preach the Gospel than the church that has become officially accepted by society. In the U.S. we must recognize how we have accommodated ourselves to society and ask how closely we want to be aligned with the state in the future. How much have we put our country's priorities before our Lord's? What have we sacrificed in exchange for toleration and acceptance by the state?"

"A retired bishop told us (in the GDR): "I would rather confront militant atheism than latent atheism." The result of that confrontation seems to be a church based on risk-taking and personal commitment."

Going Home

"I live in a small farming community. In such a situation, you can let yourself become isolated and removed from the people and the problems of the world. After learning so much about the danger the world is in, I can no longer allow the people in my town to ignore the great threat of a nuclear holocaust."

"It has been confusing to hear different opinions about how to go about peace making. I have to search for my own ways to accomplish my own commitments to peace making. It will be an everyday struggle."

"I have experienced deeply the power of risking, of taking reconciliation seriously. Each of us, East and West, has taken the first tentative steps toward understanding and building bridges. As we maintain contact in the years to come I trust that the bridges will grow stronger."

9.5 Theses For Peace

"The 9.5 Theses for Peace: they were expressing what was now our common impression and experience. Our desire for peace. Our Christian outrage at the arms race."

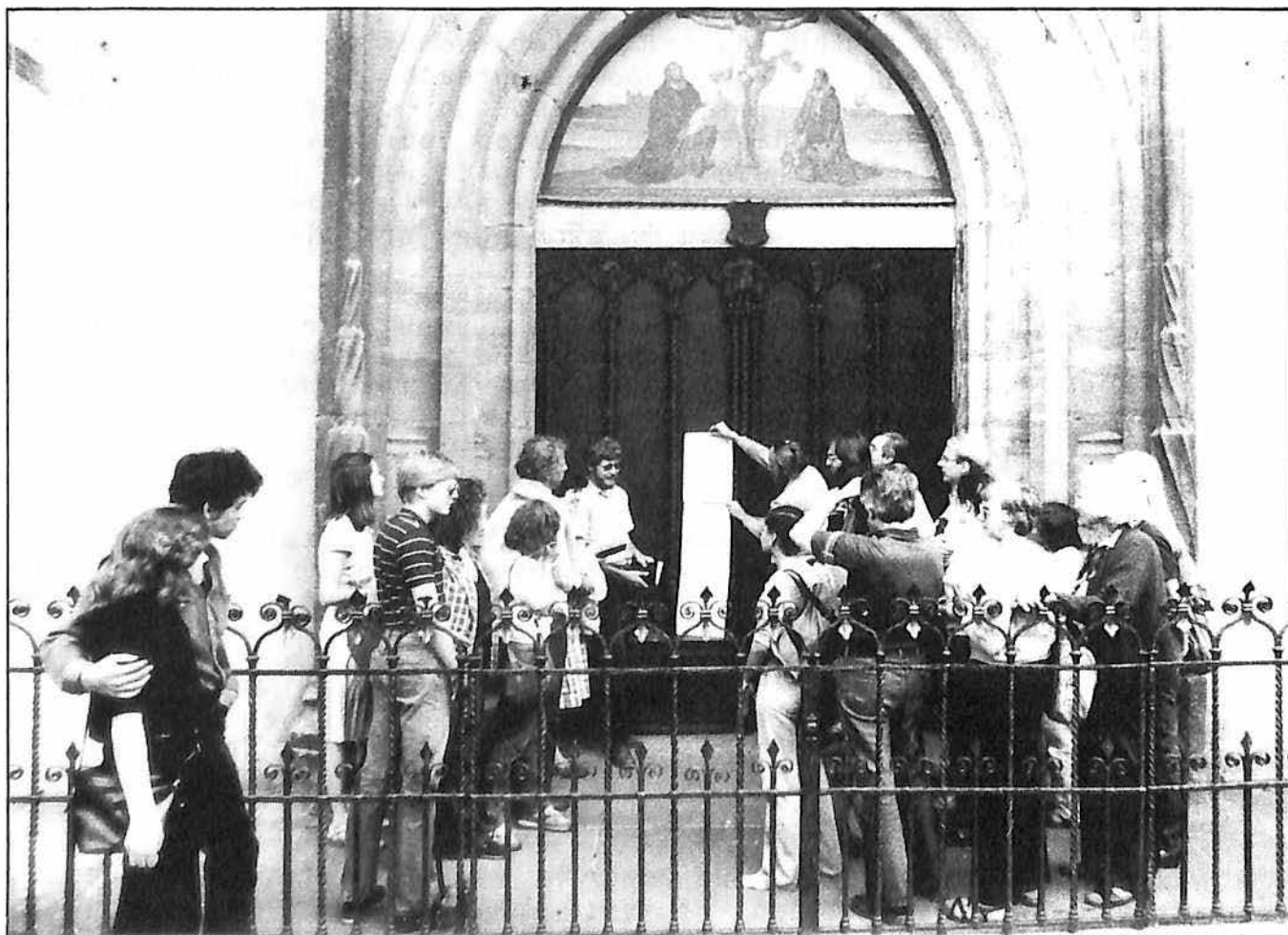
"If I were to pick the incident that really made my experience meaningful, it would have occurred after we posted our "9.5". Our bus had just pulled away, everyone was very excited, but even more relieved, and we were driving past a parked bus of Soviet soldiers that had seen the whole incident. I jokingly waved to one of them, and he smiled and raised his fist as if to say, "together, comrade, maybe, just maybe we can make this idea of peace a reality!" Maybe there is hope amidst all the selfish nationalism and distrust."

A Conclusion

"The echoes and reflections shared from Poland, USSR and Czechoslovakia, (were) stories of mutual faith, reflections of mutual fear, determination to act in hope."

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(Photo below of the group posting the 9.5 these on the Wittenberg Castle door by Tom Witt, Lutheran Peace Fellowship, USA.)



DOCUMENTATION: THE 9.5 THESES POSTED ON THE WITTENBERG CASTLE CHURCH DOOR

(The following is the full text of the 9.5 theses that the group of 21 people, sponsored by Lutheran World Ministries, posted on the Wittenberg castle church door.)

9.5 THESES FOR PEACE

I. In the first of his 96 Theses, Martin Luther stated, "When our God and Lord Jesus calls us to turn to him in repentance, he asks that the whole of our life be one of penitence." We pledge ourselves to daily renewal through self-examination, penitence and affirmation of our baptismal covenant.

II. Despite our sinful nature, God has granted us grace and has commanded us to love one another. We pledge ourselves to dare to trust and to refuse to hate the one called "enemy."

III. In the name of Christ whose perfect love has cast our fear, we find no security in weapons of mass destruction and weapons which continue to create a pervasive fear of a new holocaust.

IV. Liberated by God's grace from sin, death and the power of the evil one, we pledge ourselves to manifest our freedom by actively resisting the bondage of nuclear sin.

V. Confessing God as the one who is the beginning and end of all, we condemn the blasphemous threat of nuclear weapons to determine the end of the world. We pledge ourselves to live in this season of faith entrusting our future to God.

VI. The church is the one body of Christ, gathered from every tribe and nation, yet transcending allegiance to any tribe or nation. In aiming our weapons at each other, we aim them at the body of Christ. Therefore we pledge ourselves to oppose all weapons of mass destruction by any means compatible with the gospel and to oppose further escalation of the nuclear arms race through the employment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe.

VIII. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, to be shared justly and lovingly with all humankind. We pledge ourselves to challenge governments and institutions responsible for the proliferation of weapons built at the expense of the poor.

IX. They shall beat their swords into plowshares ... nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Challenged as people of God to transform the tools of war into the things that make for peace, we pledge ourselves to stand committed to open dialogue, peace education and the active pursuit of non-violent conflict resolution.

.5 Peace is more than the absence of war; it is the presence of justice. As long as there is injustice in the world, the work of peace is incomplete.

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YOUTH WORSHIP FESTIVAL UPDATE

DATE: April 14-22/23 (Easter). We expect that some people may wish to leave Paris on Sunday night, April 22.

PLACE: CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE RENCONTRES DU C.P.C.V. located in Saint Prix, Paris.

Address: 7, Rue du Chateau de la Chasse, 95 390 Saint Prix, FRANCE.

COST: The Lutheran World Federation will take care of the expenses for all preparatory work and for the running of the conference. Participants must pay their own travel and accommodation in Paris. The total daily amount for meals and accommodation is only 110.00 French Francs or a total of Ffr. 990.00.

Participation: Because of facilities, the participation will be limited, and those who are interested in the festival should submit their registrations as soon as possible. The festival will be a regional event; we expect most of the participants to come from Europe, although we also hope that some North American participants will be present.

The aim is to invite "groups" -- we include in this word also smaller/loosely organized groups of less than 10 people, which have been involved in worship through songs, drama, dance, etc. (not solely singing groups). But it will also be open for individuals with experience in worship, and with interest and necessary skills for meaningful participation.

Program: The most important aspect of the program will be to worship together. Being together during Easter week will also be an impetus towards worship. The groups will be asked to prepare contributions to our worshipping during the Festival.

THE FINAL DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION WILL BE FEBRUARY 29, 1984.

Registration forms are available at the LWF Youth Desk, P.O. Box No. 66, 150 Rte de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland. Tel (022) 98 94 00. Further inquiries can also be sent to the Youth Desk or to the coordination office in Paris: Rev. Bruneau Jousselein, 22, Rue des Archives, 75004 Paris, France. Tel 272 49 84 where registration forms are also available.



Photo above from the Hannover Kirchentag, by Jörgen Carlsson, RKU, Sweden

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